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Agenda item 8

Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session

Draft report

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–18	2
II.	Organizational questions	19–26	5
	A. Opening of the session	19	5
	B. Election of officers	20	5
	C. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work	21–23	6
	D. Observers	24–25	7
	E. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day	26	7

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I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In section I, paragraph 2, of its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly",

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group,[1] reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182 and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67. The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to fifty-first sessions (see resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162 A and B, 43/60 A and B, 44/50, 45/76 A and B, 46/73 B, 47/73 B, 48/44 B, 49/38 B, 50/31 B and 51/138 B), the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee[2] and its recommendations and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in its resolution 34/182. At its fifty-second session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[3] and adopted consensus resolutions 52/70 A and B of 10 December 1997. At its fifty-third session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[4] and adopted consensus resolutions 53/59 A and B of 3 December 1998. At its fifty-fourth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[5] and adopted consensus resolutions 54/82 A and B of 6 December 1999. At its fifty-fifth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[6] and adopted consensus resolutions 55/136 A and B of 8 December 2000. At its fifty-sixth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[7] and adopted consensus

resolutions 56/64 A of 10 December 2001 and 56/64 B of 24 December 2001. At its fifty-seventh session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[8] and adopted consensus resolutions 57/130 A and B of 11 December 2002. At its fifty-eighth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[9] and adopted consensus resolutions 58/101 A and B of 9 December 2003.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely, China and Mexico; at its forty-first session, the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, the Assembly appointed Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe as new members of the Committee; and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78 and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay as members. The Assembly also decided to appoint the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as a member of the Committee, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 78 to 79 and appointed Burkina Faso as a member.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 79 to 81 and appointed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members.

8. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 81 to 83 and appointed Gabon and Israel as members.

9. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 83 to 88 and appointed Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan and South Africa as members.

10. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 88 to 89 and appointed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a member.

11. At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 89 to 90 and appointed Georgia as a member.

12. At its fifty-third session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 90 to 93 and appointed Angola, the Republic of Moldova and Solomon Islands as members.

13. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 93 to 95 and appointed Liberia and Mozambique as members of the Committee.

14. At its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 95 to 97 and appointed Armenia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as members of the Committee. Furthermore, the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to membership in the United Nations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/12 of 1 November 2000, terminated the membership of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in all organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations, including the Committee on Information.

15. At its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 96 to 98 and appointed Azerbaijan and Monaco as members.

16. At its fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 98 to 99 and appointed Saudi Arabia as a member.

17. At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 99 to 102, and appointed Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Switzerland as members.

18. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea

Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Lebanon
Liberia
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Malta
Mexico
Monaco
Mongolia
Morocco
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Suriname
Switzerland
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Zimbabwe

II. Organizational questions

A. Opening of the session

19. The organizational meeting of the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Information was held on 26 April 2004 at United Nations Headquarters. The session was opened by the Chairman of the Committee, Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh).

B. Election of officers

20. Following an oral amendment by the Chairman to the provisional agenda, the Committee decided to include "Election of officers" as one of the agenda items. Although the Bureau was elected for a two-year term at its twenty-fifth session, Larbi Djacta (Algeria) made a request to withdraw from the Bureau. Kais Kabtani (Tunisia) was nominated by the African Group to serve as a Vice-Chairman in place

of Mr. Djacta. The officers of the Committee on Information for the period 2003-2004 are thus as follows:

Chairman:
Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

Vice-Chairmen:
Kais Kabtani (Tunisia)
Sebastião Filipe Coelho Ferreira (Portugal)
Marius Ioan Dragolea (Romania)

Rapporteur:
Janice Miller (Jamaica)

C. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

21. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted the following agenda and programme of work (A/AC.198/2004/1):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Admission of new members.
5. Statement by the Chairman.
6. Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.
7. General debate and consideration of substantive questions.
8. Open-ended working group of the Committee on Information.
9. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day.
10. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

22. The Committee held the substantive meetings of its twenty-sixth session at United Nations Headquarters from 26 April to 7 May 2004.

23. For its consideration of agenda item 7, the Committee had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2004/2);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2004/3);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries and in-depth review of library activities (A/AC.198/2004/4);

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2003 (A/AC.198/2004/5);

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on better publicizing the work and decisions of the General Assembly (A/AC.198/2004/6);

(f) Note by the Secretary-General on the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 (A/AC.198/2004/7).

D. Observers

24. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Bahamas, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, the Dominican Republic, Iceland, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Nauru, Panama, Paraguay, Qatar, Rwanda, Samoa and Uganda. The Holy See also participated as an observer.

25. Representatives of the following specialized agencies also participated as observers: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The African Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie also participated as observers.

E. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day

26. On 3 May, the Committee observed World Press Freedom Day 2004 with an event organized by the Department of Public Information. The Secretary-General opened the meeting, which was also addressed by the Chairman of the Committee on Information, the Director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the President of the United Nations Correspondents Association. A number of distinguished print and broadcast journalists took part in a panel discussion on the theme "Reporting and Under-reporting: Who Decides?", which was moderated by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

[2] Ibid., *Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/36/21); ibid., *Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigendum (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigenda (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., *Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/39/21); ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/40/21); ibid., *Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/41/21); ibid., *Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/42/21); ibid., *Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/43/21); ibid., *Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/44/21); ibid., *Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/45/21); ibid., *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/46/21); ibid., *Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/47/21); ibid., *Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/48/21); ibid., *Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/49/21); ibid., *Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/50/21); and ibid., *Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/51/21).

[3] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/52/21/Rev.1).

[4] Ibid., *Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/53/21/Rev.1).

[5] Ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* and addendum (A/54/21/Rev.1).

[6] Ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/55/21).

[7] Ibid., *Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/56/21).

[8] Ibid., *Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/57/21).

[9] Ibid., *Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/58/21).